

The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Medway



The Great Lines The Inner Lines or Garrison Gardens Chatham and Gillingham



January 2015

The Great Lines

The Inner Lines or Garrison Gardens

Chatham and Gillingham, Kent

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INTRODUCTION

This site description and accompanying dossier have been prepared by the Kent Gardens Trust as part of its wider review of ***The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens***. This part of the review, carried out for Medway Council in 2013 -14, covers sites within the Medway local authority area with the aim to:

a) Review the historic nature, content, current state and significance of the sites currently identified in the ***Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens*** for the Medway local authority area along with others identified by Medway Council. The review has been undertaken using English Heritage's criteria for identifying the significance of local heritage assets to provide a consistent approach. The revised list of sites has the potential to support development of a Local List of historic sites in Medway should the Council wish to progress this in future¹. The list of sites researched and evaluated in this review would be subject to consultation as part of any Local List development and is therefore not intended to be final.

b) Inform future funding applications for historic spaces by the identification of significance

c) Inform future conservation and/or any development of sites by the identification of the significance of key historic character, features and association including that of setting and viewpoints.

The extent of the area identified represents the current surviving area of the designed landscape, the boundary line generally reflecting the maximum extent of the historic gardens or parkland (although there are exceptions such as where land has been irreversibly lost to development). The boundary line takes no account of current ownership. Further information is available from the contacts listed below. The partnership would like to thank the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much of their time, effort and hospitality to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

Medway Council
Greenspace, Heritage
& Library Services
Gun Wharf
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www.medway.gov.uk

Kent County Council
Heritage Conservation
Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XX
01622 696918
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Kent Gardens Trust
www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk

English Heritage
www.english-heritage.org.uk

¹ English Heritage (2012) 'Good Practice Guide to Local Listing'

SITE DESCRIPTION

**KENT
MEDWAY**

CHATHAM AND GILLINGHAM

**THE GREAT LINES
THE INNER LINES OR
GARRISON GARDENS**

Centred on 57600 168700

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The site survives, along with the Lower Lines and the Great Lines Field of Fire, as an example of the change to civilian recreational use of redundant military installations and land in Chatham. The Inner Lines land in particular survives as the site of a C19 recreation ground laid out around an C18 domestic garden (now, 2014, gone), both associated with new thinking about – and experimenting with – the improvement of the lives of the resident military, both officers and ranks, including allocating allotment land for vegetable growing by the troops. Although only remnant shrubberies survive, the pleasure ground design was typical of a mid C18 villa garden while the C19 recreation ground layout of tennis courts, croquet and bandstand, reflected both a military desire for order and the contemporary style of public park design nationally. The garden and park continue to fulfil their recreational role for the present-day adjacent military housing. The site has archaeological potential for the buried remains of the designed landscape and its structures and contains evidential value of pre-military use in the form of an Anglo-Saxon burial ground beneath its surface.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Great Lines fortification, of which the Inner Lines forms part, has been an area of human activity from prehistoric times. It was occupied during the Anglo-Saxon period, from which a cemetery site survives, the Roman period and later became the location of the medieval town of Chatham. Together with surrounding farmland and common grazing, the medieval town was destroyed when displaced by the defence fortifications. Opposition by local people to the loss of ancient rights of way and cricket pitches was ineffective as the town became dominated by the military.

The need for some kind of linear bastioned artillery fortifications was realised after the Dutch Raid of 1667 when the Dutch navy was able to sail unimpeded up the River Medway into the heart of our naval anchorage. This resulted in heavy fortifications being installed along and at the mouth of the river. However, the landward approach to the dockyard had been left entirely unprotected. An Act of Parliament passed in 1708/09 recognised this fact and led to the compulsory purchase of the necessary land to provide defences. A plan showing the proposed defence lines drawn up by engineer Hugh Debbieg in 1756 and called 'Plan of the Intrenchment' shows the Inner Lines area as an open area within the ramparts. (Kendall p23)

From the C18 onwards, domestic requirements began to exert an influence on the use and layout of land around the fortifications. Land immediately east of the dockyard and to the west of the Inner Lines ramparts was laid out as pleasure and recreation grounds for the military residents of the 'Garrison' or 'Chatham' Barracks. A house was built for the Commandant in c1757 (The historical landscape-Great Lines City Park p22) with surrounding pleasure grounds typical of an C18 villa garden and a kitchen garden. A plan of the Barracks dated 1864 (Kendall p119) shows a formally laid-out garden reflecting military order. A photograph taken in 1857 shows the front of the house, demolished sometime before 1960, with a lawn with a central sundial enclosed by a circular drive (Kendall p72). A survey of the garden in 1864 described the garden as a gentleman's C18 century Pleasure Grounds (The historical landscape -Great Lines City Park p22). The house was screened by shrubbery and a brick wall to the south and east although a raised path within the walls gave views of the garden itself and beyond to the 'borrowed' landscape of the Battery. Features within the grounds included a kitchen garden, an orchard and ice house.

During the whole period when the military ramparts were operational and even up to the present time (2014) the Inner Lines maintained a considerable area of open ground, which was used for mustering and manoeuvring troops. The area was kept largely free of buildings until the garrison church of St Barbara was erected in 1854.

Throughout the 1860s more thought began to be given to the living conditions of soldiers in barracks and how improvements could be made to accommodation and recreational facilities. Concurrently the huge defensive ramparts became obsolete because of advances in weapon technology and the need to keep open ground as a buffer became unnecessary (Kendall p124).

In 1856 *The Times* reported that the 'open land at the Inner Lines was used for military sports days, which included improbable events like the egg-and-ladle and the three-legged race.' Some of the land was divided into plots for use as vegetable allotments for the troops, which were a great success (Kendall p125/126).

Recreational use was formalised in 1868 by a grant to the garrison in December by the Secretary of State for War for laying out what was recorded on the OS edition of 1897 as the 'Garrison Recreation Ground'. Intended for officers, it was designed and laid out in the style of a mid C19 public park with '*a circuitous path, which enclosed a geometry of smaller elliptical and circular paths...the Park would have been turfed, and planted with shrubbery along its perimeter, in great part evergreen, with select trees and shrubs, including conifers, within the central areas*' ('The historical landscape – Great Lines City Park' p24). During this period, avenues of trees were planted in particular along the western boundary of the Inner Lines, Maxwell Road and Mansion Road and further, more random groups, along the inner ditch.

The work started in January 1869 and was carried out by the Royal Engineers who landscaped the ground and installed roads and carriage drives. A Mr

Menzies, Deputy Surveyor of Windsor Park, was engaged to design the project. The Garrison Recreation Ground opened in May 1869; various regimental bands took it in turns to play in the park's bandstand, in place by the end of the C19. (Kendall p125) Officers and non-commissioned officers and men were segregated into separate areas.

Most of the layout was complete by the end of the 1860s although a bowling green was added in 1870 and croquet lawns in 1873. Tennis courts were also built in the south section of the Inner Lines. The United Services (Officers) Lawn Tennis Club at its height had sixteen grass courts, two hard courts, two croquet lawns and a pavilion.

The 1896 OS edition shows the Commandant's house and grounds at the end of the century; shrubberies and a large lawn within the Pleasure Grounds on the west side of the house survive while to the east the C18 paths and shrubberies are intact (The historical landscape – Great Lines City Park p26).

By the 1930s the Inner Lines was largely being used for military recreational activities (1932-1939 OS map). A new bandstand had been erected on top of a bank fortification to overlook the courts. Shrubs were planted as a backdrop. Next to it, the C19 pleasure grounds still contained a mixture of deciduous species and conifers. To the east, on the site of the King's Bastion, two other pavilions had been built for further sporting activities. North of Sally Port there was a row of housing, which was later extended to completely cover the northern section west of Mansion Road (The historical landscape – Great Lines City Park p31).

An aerial photo from February 1948 (Kendall p73) shows that a considerable area of the pleasure grounds still survived. However, the 1960 OS map shows that the Commandant's house had been demolished and the C18 pleasure grounds had become overgrown with trees and shrubs, although paths, banks and walls still remained (The historical landscape-Great Lines City Park p35 & 44).

Virtually all of the designed features of the C18 pleasure grounds and most of the C19 Garrison Recreation ground are now (2014) gone, buried or degraded but due to the position of the Inner Lines, adjacent to the current military housing, the site continues in its original purpose of providing a recreational ground for soldiers and their families.

As part of the Great Lines Heritage Park the Inner Lines are currently owned by Medway Council and managed through a comprehensive management and maintenance plan drawn up in 2012.

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The Inner Lines site lies between Gillingham and Chatham, to the east of Chatham Dockyard, the line of its fortification forming its eastern boundary. The site is bounded by Sally Port road to north; Maxwell Road forms the western boundary (between the Inner Lines and the dockyard). To the south it abuts Fort

Amherst at the Cornwallis Battery. Set on the escarpment above the River Medway to the west, but with no views of the river itself, it covers an area of approximately 8 ha. Its setting comprises military and civilian housing to the west, east and north and to the south, the extensive defensive structures of Fort Amherst. The military housing to the north was built between 1952 and the 1970s on land formally part of the Inner Lines' recreation area.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The Inner Lines is accessible at various points notably from Maxwell Road and Sally Port Road. A main path meanders through from Fort Amherst in the south to a car park on Sally Port Road where a guardhouse once stood.

THE PARK

The Inner Lines today (2014) is roughly divided into two sections, north and south. The northern section, south of Sally Port Gardens Road comprises an area of grass-floored open woodland intersected with a few informal footpaths, known as the Paddock. This is the only surviving part of the former extensive encampment areas within the Inner Lines, which were originally laid out for military recreational use. The southern section, which comprises the former C19 Officers' Park, contains tennis courts, which survive in form and location from those laid out in the late C19. The path routes also mostly survive from the original 1860s layout although are now tarmac surfaced and lined by mature specimen trees such as *Aesculus hippocastanum* (horse chestnut), *Fraxinus* spp. (ash) and *Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea' (copper beech). Areas surrounding the tennis courts are in use for car parking and are in poor condition. The long avenue of trees parallel with Maxwell road planted as part of the 1868 layout and shown still surviving on the 4th edition OS map of 1932-1939 has disappeared, leaving little of the formally-planted character of the C19 design (The historical landscape – Great Lines City Park p 44).

REFERENCES

Books and Articles

Kendall, Peter, *The Royal Engineers at Chatham 1750-2012*, English Heritage, 2012

The Historical Landscape - Great Lines City Park, report prepared by EDA on behalf of Medway Council & Chatham World Heritage steering group, 2008

Maps

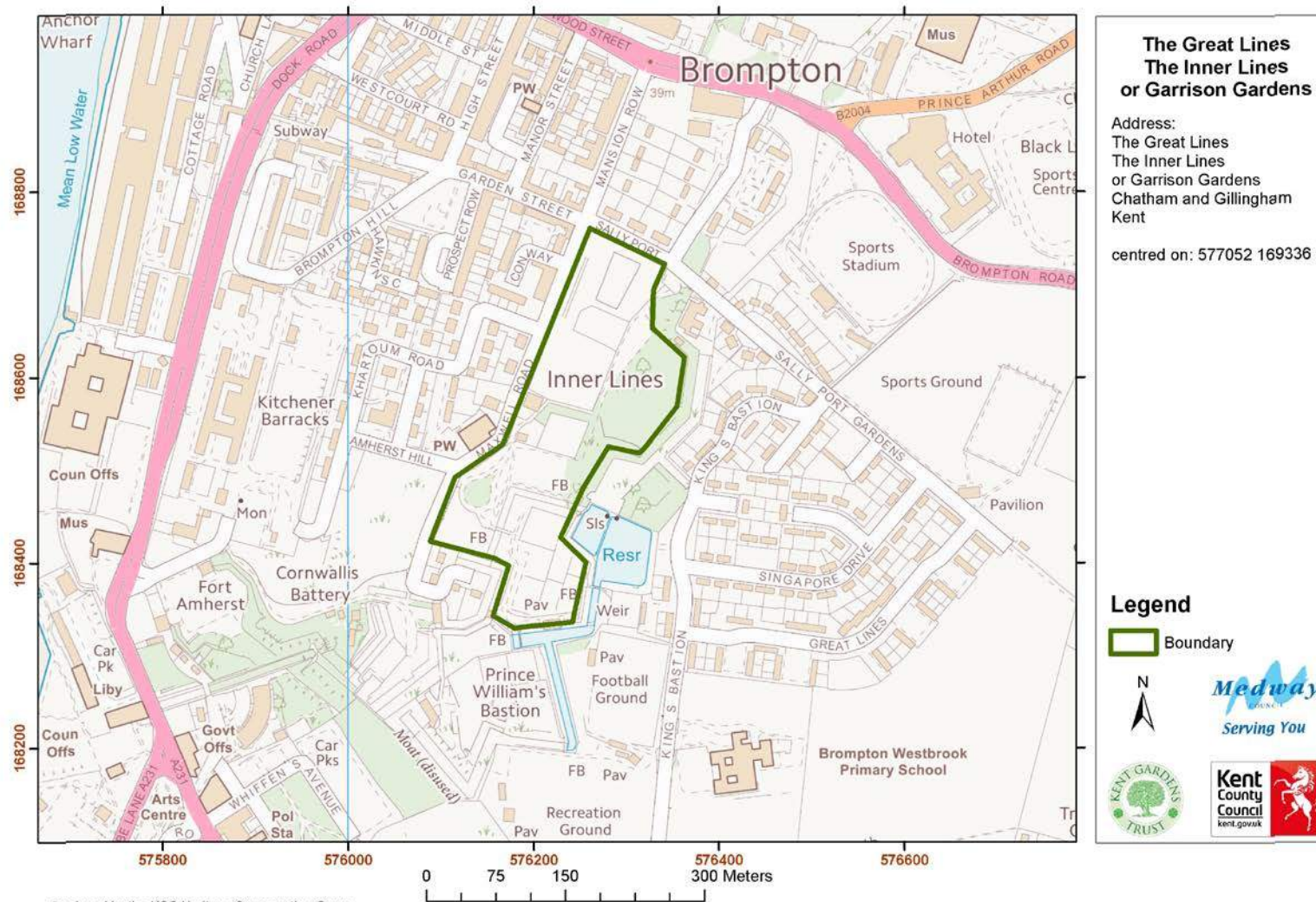
1st edition OS map 1862-1875

4th edition OS map 1932-1939

Research and Description by Jane Davidson
Virginia Hinze (editor)

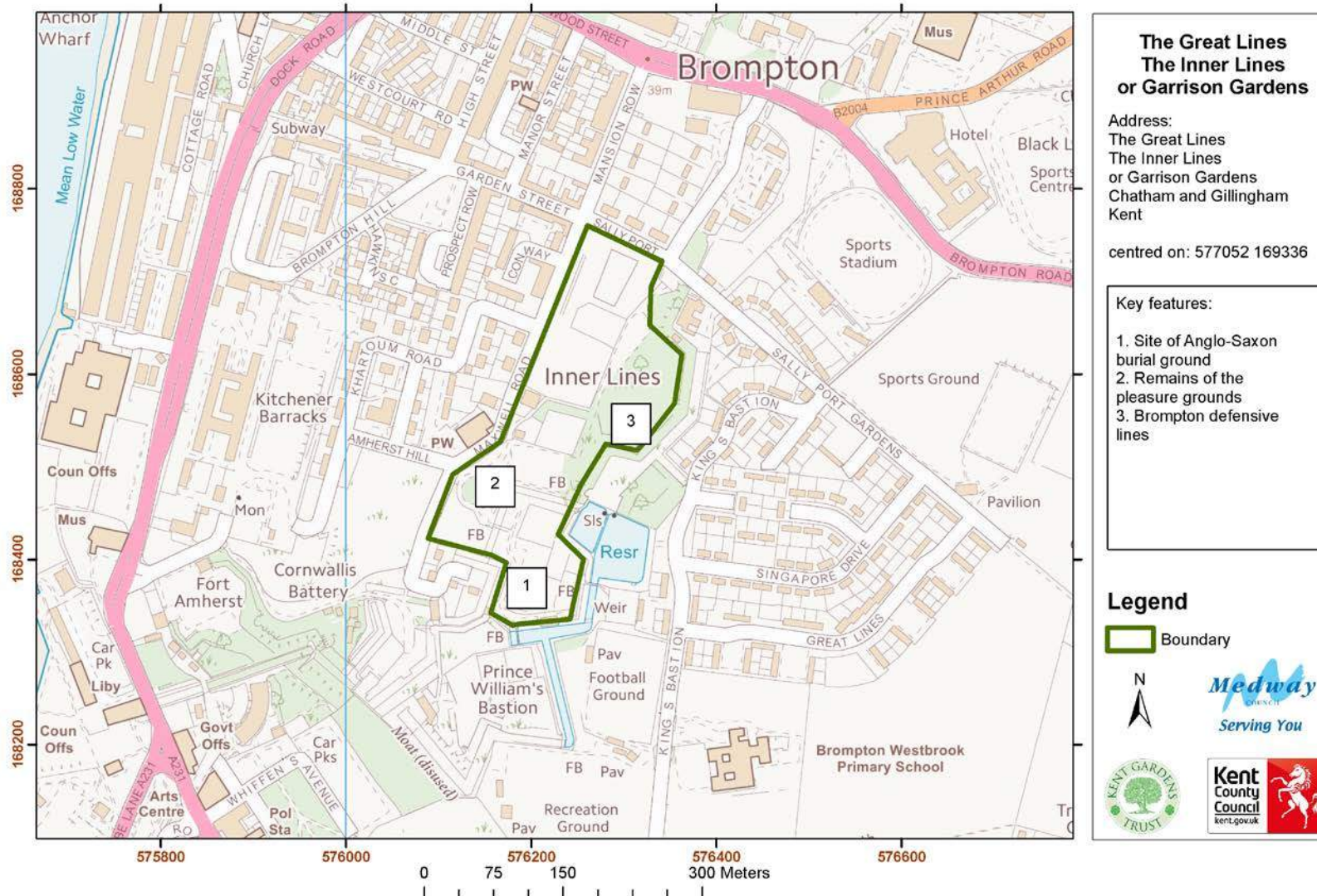
Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2013 review of Medway

Fig. 1 Boundary map



Kent Compendium of Historic Parks & Gardens – 2013 review of Medway

Fig. 2 Key features map



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Fig. 3 Aerial photograph (2012)



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Fig. 4 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1862-1875)



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Fig. 5 4th edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1929 - 1952)

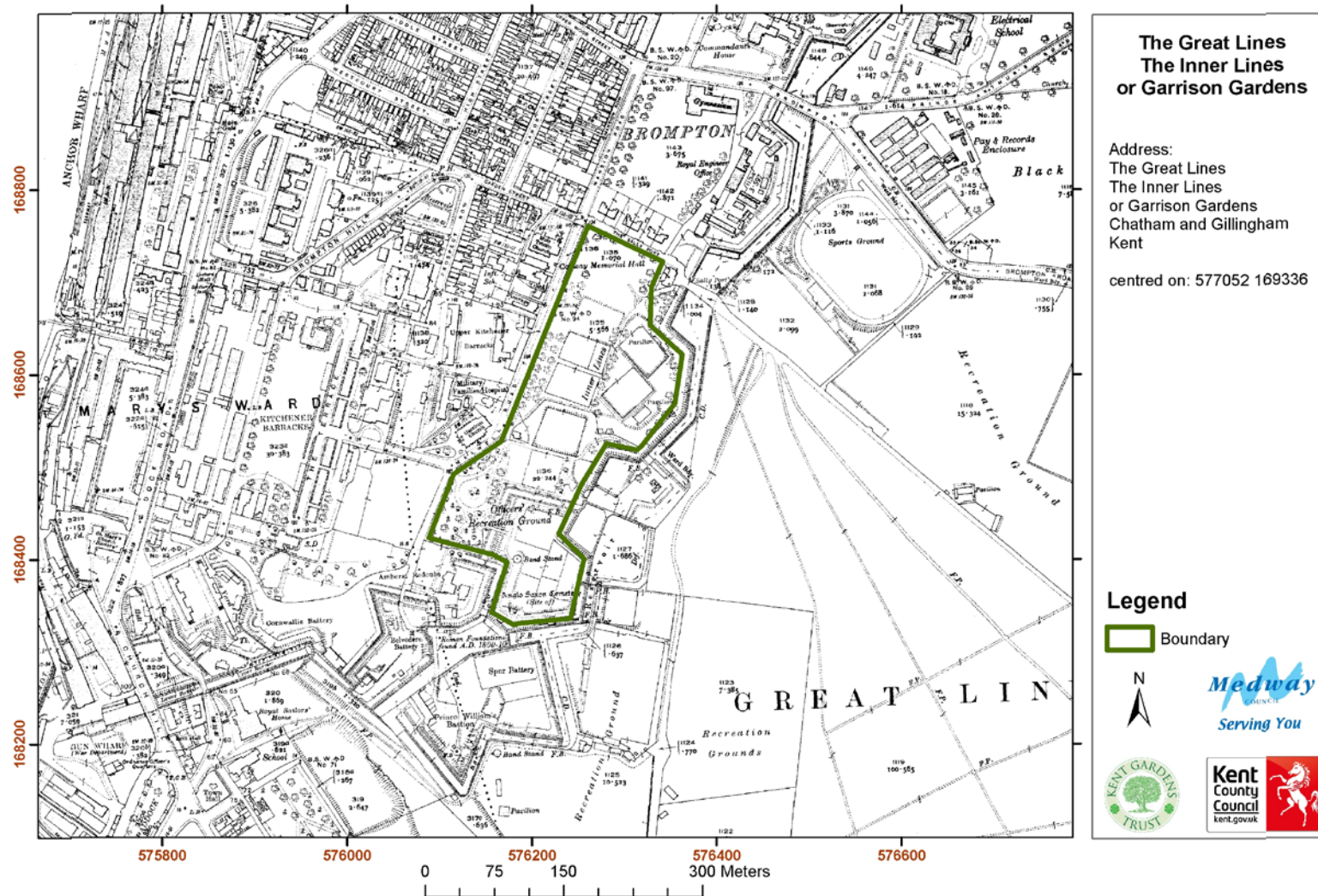


Fig. 6 Remains of Officers' Pleasure Gardens



Fig. 7 Tennis Courts



Fig. 8 Field at Sally Port

